

Central Intelligence Agency

Washington, D. C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

19 September 1984

TRENDS IN NICARAGUAN SUPPORT FOR SUBVERSION [REDACTED]

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Summary

Nicaragua continues to support insurgency and other forms of subversion against non-Marxist governments in the region through arms flows, training, communications support and advice. Salvadoran guerrillas remain the primary recipient. Other groups, especially Costa Rican and Honduran, have also benefitted.

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] point to a continuing flow of munitions and manpower from Nicaragua to the Salvadoran guerrillas.

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-- At times the quantity is considerable: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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This memorandum was requested by the Honorable Robert C. McFarlane, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. It was prepared by [REDACTED] Middle America-Caribbean Division, Office of African and Latin American Analysis. It was coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. Information available as of 19 September 1984. Comments and questions are welcome and should be addressed to Chief, Middle America-Caribbean Division, [REDACTED]

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-- In April [redacted] Cuba was stepping up deliveries of weapons and other military supplies through Nicaragua to El Salvador in preparation for the insurgents' fall offensive.

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[redacted]

-- In June [redacted] the guerrillas had received a new offer from Nicaragua to supply munitions and personnel needs when required.

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We currently estimate that roughly three quarters of the Salvadoran guerrillas' needs are met by external resupply, and perhaps one third or more of their small arms requirements are infiltrated--in the latter case a substantial reduction from the levels of earlier years due to large arms flows during that period and guerrilla success in capturing arms in El Salvador. Virtually the entire flow originates in or passes through Nicaragua.

-- [redacted] Salvadoran guerrilla groups were still headquartered in Nicaragua--including the two largest, the ERP and the FPL.

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Support for subversion in Central America continues to receive high-level direction, [redacted]

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-- Sandinista Directorate member Bayardo Arce has ultimate authority for arranging arms shipments.

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- [redacted]
- A political section, coordinating aid requests from foreign insurgent groups, consists of separate branches for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and even Costa Rica.
 - A special operations section, which carries out the deliveries, has separate branches for land, air, and sea transport.

A major new training facility for Salvadoran guerrillas has been identified this summer on the Cosiquina Peninsula, across the Gulf of Fonseca from El Salvador.

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- [redacted] a military barracks under construction near Santa Julia was intended for that purpose. [redacted]

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[redacted]

[redacted] since April 1984 construction of 19 buildings has been completed or is underway, as well as a small arms range, air obstacle course, and a possible training site for the SA-7, the shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missile of Soviet bloc manufacture. This camp's use of natural concealment and the nonmilitary layout of the buildings indicate the installation is for unconventional warfare training.

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- Just southeast of the camp is a staging area (Potosi), a known transshipment point for infiltrating men, arms, and munitions into El Salvador.

[redacted] the number of Salvadoran guerrillas assembled in Nicaragua for training or staging purposes in 1984 may have increased over what we believe has been the case since 1979.

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[redacted]

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[redacted] as of July 1984 the FMLN had about 4000 Salvadorans training in various Nicaraguan camps. Though the numbers far exceed our earlier estimates of several hundred Salvadoran insurgent personnel in Nicaragua-- [redacted]

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[redacted] may reflect some accumulation of Salvadoran manpower for the reported planned fall offensive by the FMLN. It may also indicate that the FMLN is using Nicaragua to conduct training no longer possible to carry out in El Salvador due to Salvadoran army pressures.

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So extensive has been the Nicaraguan support effort for Salvadoran insurgents that in private conversations Nicaraguan officials no longer conceal Managua's direct involvement, though they do try to minimize the extent. For example:

- In May 1984, during farewell conversations with the US Ambassador to Managua, Interior Minister Borge said that Salvadoran communications facilities in Nicaragua were no longer essential to the FMLN, but it was impossible to close them down unilaterally. Bayardo Arce said that just as the US denied mining the ports, so Nicaragua denied aiding the Salvadorans; both knew the truth.

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Nicaraguan insurgent operations have occasionally impeded Managua's support to the FMLN.

- Facilities in Nicaragua were attacked last fall and early this year. At least one transshipment point was badly damaged.

The Nicaraguans are continuing to support other Marxist insurgencies, although at levels below the major Salvadoran effort.

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- In mid-1983 and mid-1984 the Sandinistas infiltrated into Honduras a total of 110-120 Honduran insurgents trained in Nicaragua and Cuba. A combination of desertions and effective counterinsurgency action by Honduran security forces thwarted both attempts with apparent ease.

- [redacted] insurgents have provided abundant details on their [redacted] training. One of the [redacted] Hondurans stated that part of his training included serving with an international unit fighting anti-Sandinista forces in Nicaragua.

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- We believe that the Sandinistas, despite their recent overtures for improved bilateral relations with Honduras, continue to view their meddling operations as a possible way to force short-term concessions from Tegucigalpa while establishing a base for longer term subversion of the government.

Sandinista sponsorship of destabilization in Costa Rica has continued.

- The Sandinistas have maintained close ties to Costa Rican communists, several hundred of whom entered Nicaragua late last year, were trained and equipped by the Nicaraguans and as the Mora Canas Brigade fought anti-Sandinista insurgents in southern Nicaragua until July 1984.
- The recall of these field experienced combatants to Costa Rica has added to the potential for political instability in that country.

Elsewhere in the region there have been fragmentary reports of Nicaraguan mischief-making since the beginning of the year.

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